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SHORT-HAUL FORESTRY AND WHAT IT MEANS
ESPECIALLY TO THE FARMER

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Farmers own nearly one-third of the forest lands and use more than one-third of the lumber produced in this country. From this statement, it is seen that farmers as a group should supply the larger part of their own needs for lumber and timber from farm woodlands - but such is not actually the case.

The average rail haul for lumber is in the neighborhood of 200 miles. But large amounts are shipped from the West coast to eastern United States. This lumber is, of course, transported six or eight times as far as the average, with the result that freight charges very often exceed the value of the lumber at the mill.

With nearly 4/5 of the remaining sawtimber situated in the far West, which produces more than 50% of all lumber consumed, it can readily be seen that the transportation and hauling cost to the consumer is an item of no mean magnitude.

Industry, to a certain extent, recognizes the importance of a short haul of timber products. For example, during the past two years, there has been a tremendous development of pulp and paper mills in the South, with new investments during that period amounting to some \$100,000,000. One of the important reasons for the location of these plants in the South is the comparatively large area of second-growth southern pine available for conversion into pulp and paper and enjoying a short haul as compared to wood or wood pulp transported from Canada or European countries. This factor becomes an important item in the location of mills. Pulpwood at one of these plants is worth a certain price, regardless of how far it has been transported. The farmer nearby having a small hauling cost can sell pulpwood very profitably, whereas the farmer 150 to 200 miles away may have to forego a portion of his income on this wood. A point is finally reached where the net return, because of hauling charges, leaves no profit, and he cannot afford to cut or sell his timber.

In the early days, and even through the first half of the last century, most of the lumber and timber needed in American communities was obtained from nearby sources, with little if any expense involved in transportation. Today, a farmer in the Great Middle West who does not have his own woodland is very likely to be using Douglas fir from the Northwest and pine from the South for his repairs and construction work. After paying the long freight-haul charges and the miscellaneous intervening profits, many farmers are finding lumber to be in the luxury class. Undoubtedly, this is one of the causes for the lack of needed repairs and new buildings on many farms in our great agricultural belt.

Short-haul forestry means, then, the growing of timber within a reasonable distance of where the products will be used. It is a well-known fact that the vast pineries of the Lake States in large part were responsible for the develop-
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ment of the agricultural Middle West. When pine lumber was being produced in vast quantities in this nearby region, practically every farmer could afford to purchase all the lumber needed on his farm. Nearness to market is a definite economic advantage, which is rapidly being lost in this country, due to the vanishing stands of timber near consuming centers. It is just as uneconomical for the farmer to buy imported lumber when he has land on his farm capable of producing timber as it is for him to buy eggs, butter, meat, or what-not, which have been produced hundreds of miles away.

Farms, generally speaking, are located in areas of richer soils and the farm woodland portions of them are, on the average, more productive than the average run of forest soils. The farmer knows it is wise to keep the rough and hilly land in timber to protect the slopes from soil erosion. Then there are other areas that are all in woods because the soil may be too poor for crops or pasture. Taxes must be paid on these lands whether they grow good crops of trees, poor crops, or none at all. It, therefore, is good business to keep these wooded areas just as productive as possible. The methods are relatively simple.

Many farm woods have been cut and culled, burned and pastured, until the volume of standing timber is exceedingly small. The farm woods should be considered in the same category as a bank account, drawing interest. As long as the farmer uses the interest or a little less, his bank account will remain intact - or may even grow in volume. If more than the interest is continually used, however, the bank account will soon disappear. Naturally, woodlands that have been cut too heavily should be handled so that the bank account grows, by removing each year less than the interest or growth. In some cases nature will have to be assisted through planting of trees in those areas which are open and which are not restocking naturally. Fires must be kept out to give the little trees an opportunity to grow and, in many cases, it is essential that livestock be excluded if a satisfactory timber crop is to be expected.

The United States Forest Service strongly advocates making all forest land productive so there will be an ample supply of lumber and timber products reasonably close at hand. Regionally, each part of the country should grow the kind of timber to which its soil and climate are best adapted and, locally, it is advocated that each farmer dedicate a portion of his farm to the growing of timber, either for use on the farm or for sale, or both. Grown locally in this way, forest products will not the farmer all the advantages of short-haul economy, and will provide him with a reserve timber bank account which, through the years, will prove to be one of his most valuable crops.

May I suggest to you farmers who are listening in, if you have not already done so, write or consult your Extension Forester or State Forester for further information and assistance on how to keep your woodland productive and profitable.

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